2: Gervis T-3 (no date) 1954 AV1 Kashmir AV1

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The States and Cities of Poonch and Jammu

To the south—slightly east—of Gilgit lies the State of Poonch, which sits between the Kashmir Valley and Pakistani Punjab, with a range of mountains to the east and the river Jhelum to the west as natural borders. It is a country of which little has been written, yet most of the visitors who entered Kashmir in the old days by the most popular road, one which runs from Rawalpindi in the Punjab to Srinagar, passed close to it, if not through it. No doubt they were concentrating upon the road, which although fairly good, has its terrors in twists, hairpin bends, blind turnings and precipices, especially when the visitor was forced to rely upon the driving judgment of car drivers or tonga wallahs whose one idea was to get to the end of the journey.

The surrounding mountains are just as magnificent as in the other parts of Kashmir—in fact are merely the other side of those viewed from the Valley, their northern slopes a mass of firs and pines. The immediate surrounding hills are strangely of the same height, so that they appear like wave upon wave of dark green pines and firs, shaded only by the valleys or by distance. These valleys are cleft out in such a way that it would seem that the whole was once a great plateau, the softer stones and soils being washed away, and that which remains in rib-like formations being of the harder stone which with time has clothed itself with trees. On the tops of a number of these hills with naturally scarped faces, are the ruins of ancient forts, each so placed and planned that its position, with its inaccessibility, protected it against escalade, leaving the attackers to starve the defenders out from it. These hill forts are relics of the days when the country was divided up into small tracts, each with its own ruler.

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On the way there

172 is the ruined Hindu temple which is said to date back to one century after the birth of Christ.

000 It seems here that Kashmir has at last been found, for there are walnut and chestnut trees; the flat-roofed houses are seen no more; in their place are the wooden ones with the flattish sloping roofs of Kashmir with wooden tiles or thatch. In spring wild roses of all colours, white, cream, pink and red, cover the bushes by the road side; here and there leafy trees hang out over it like great sunshades; the river widens and is quieter and although still brown, appears clearer. It is swift in places though, for dashing against a rock in its path, the splash of spray is high; here and there quiet pools have found their way into the softer rock, and willows shade these, protecting the fish which have fought so far up stream, and making such places interesting to the fisherman. The views across the river, of the hill-slopes covered with different kinds of trees, broken by great limestone cliffs and the distant snow-capped mountains, especially when the sun streams through the clouds to lighten one like a glistening wedding cake, or when the sunset lends them for a while a pearl-pink tinge which slowly turns to red, is indeed heavenly.

361 Sixteen miles further on lies Baramula; the road, as it has
491 been for the last miles before Rampur, is comparatively level.
139 Peasants are to be seen more often working in the fields and small rice patches; at parts the wide river which almost ripples over the stone bed is slower in its flow and permits the use of small boats. On the side are large rocks different from those seen thereabouts and believed to have been carried down from the mountains by glaciers long since forgotten. A narrow ravine carries a path which leads through to Gulmarg, and here, until recent years, were found numbers of bears. Higher up, in the month of June, the rocks will be decorated with the pink blooms of wild rhododendron which flourish there. Hereabouts, especially from Naushera onwards, terrible damage was done in the great earthquake of 1885, which is still not forgotten in those parts. In the distance can be seen the great peak of Nanga Parbat, right ahead, the near seventeen thousand feet high Mount Haramouk, which, as one gets closer to Baramula, seems to rise sheer from the waters of the Wular Lake; on a clear

[From Uri to Rampur -- Analyst]

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day, far over to the right, the peak of Kolahoi is visible. Here the Valley of Kashmir opens before the road, but since it is on the same level does not appear to be as grand as when one bursts upon it from a high pass.

From the spread town of Baramula, the poplar-lined road goes through the flat fields to Srinagar. Some who go there still prefer to have their houseboat or donga meet them here so that they can continue the journey to the city by water. After that all is so quiet, the road with but few turns or twists; there is little to disturb the stillness except the occasional shout of a shepherd boy; no raging torrent runs below; there are no terrifying corners with honking lorries and hooting cars; no man or beast seems to be in a hurry, for it is the Vale of Kashmir, where nature has its sway. It is as though the unspoken greeting is "here rest a while".

Going out of Kashmir by the other route, a two hundred mile run to Jammu by the Banihal cart road, we left Srinagar at the other side of the city and passing the famous Pampur saffron fields, stopped in the village to buy some of its famed brand of biscuits, then went on past the ruins of the great light grey limestone temple built by King Avanti Varma in the eighth century; this is near to the roadside, surrounded by close-cropped turf, glorious in its broken and aged grandeur, especially in the spring when masses of mauve, wild iris spread around it. We continued on along the raised road through hundreds of acres of rice fields, with hamlets crushing on to the roadway, always seeming to have chosen a blind corner for their site. Tongas and bullock carts held tight to the single width tarred portion of the road and reluctantly gave way to us at the very last minute, to move over on to the dirt-built-up sides. Eventually, after thirty-two miles, we reached Khanabal, which adjoins Islamabad—by some called Anatnag. From here the poplar-lined road turns direct towards the distant mountains; still past fields of corn and rice, past small farms tucked away between willows, past clumps of the always four chinars on the wayside, past Muslim graveyards gay with mauve and white iris, shops which stand close on the edge of the road as if to demand that we stop to buy their wares from the sparsely spread shelves

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133 clothed with forest, at one time through the terraced
491 fields of rich rice cultivation, at another through thickets of lilac, barberry, and hazel, and at another through the forest itself, here composed of magnificent deodars.
172 Ruins of Buddhist temples by the roadside—some of them of great interest, and in a fair state of preservation—bear witness here, as do other remains on every well-known natural line of communication throughout the Hindu-Kush and Northern India, to the widespread power of the creed once ruling from Kandahar and Kabul to Bengal, of which now, throughout the continent of India, scarcely a trace remains, except in time-worn stones.

133 The valley of Kashmir, which is about eighty miles long by twenty broad, contains and leads to some of the most beautiful scenery in the world. Shut in by a great circle of snowy mountains, traversed by a fine river running through richly cultivated lands, adorned by a chain of lovely lakes, watered by a thousand streams, covered with numerous villages embowered in every species of fruit-tree, with lake and stream bordered by plane-trees, the magnificent "chenar," dear to the Mogul Emperors, and planted by them wherever they loved to dwell, the vale of Kashmir is, outwardly at least, the earthly paradise of the East.

133 The traveller generally leaves Baramulla in the
501 evening, and his barge is paddled and towed up by
731 sunset to a spot where boats tie up for the night. From this point, at early dawn, a start is made to cross the Woollar Lake. This great stretch of water has an evil name among the boatmen, for it is subject to swift and terrible storms, against which the keel-

(4) Lakes.

133 **Dal.**—This beautiful lake is over 3¾ miles by over 2½ miles in size. The background is provided by mountain ranges which rise 3,000 to 4,000 feet above the level of the lake. The water is fresh and abundantly supplied [367] with fish, wild duck and water-fowl. One of the main features of this lake is the famous floating gardens. The lake is a favourite place for the mooring of house-boats. One of the corners of the lake is Gagribal, noted for its very clear water. It is an ideal place for bathing. Registered bathing boats, sailing boats and motor boats for aqua-planning are available on hire at the Gagribal point.

Anchar.—This is 5 miles long and 2 miles wide, and extends towards Ganderbal. It is a good place for duck and snipe-shooting in winter months. Lotuses and lilies are to be seen here in profusion in the month of August.

Wular.—This is the largest fresh water lake in India, and is 12½ miles long and 5 miles wide. The lake can be reached from Srinagar by river as well as motor road.

Manasbal.—This lake, about 16 miles from Srinagar, is accessible both by road and river, and is considered to be the loveliest of the Kashmir lakes. About 2 miles in diameter, it is surrounded by majestic hills, and its water is blue and clear. The ruins of a fine Mughal garden are situated on one of its banks.

Kaunsarnag.—This is the largest mountain lake in Kashmir. It is situated on the Pir Panjal range, about 13,000 feet above the sea level and is over 2 miles long. It is surrounded by some of the most picturesque of the Himalayan peaks. Three of these peaks, each about 15,500 feet high, tower over this lake which usually remains frozen till the month of June.

Shishnag.—This is a mountain tarn situated at an altitude of 12,000 feet on the pilgrim road to the Sri Amarnath cave.

(5) Ancient Monuments.

172 **Pari Mahal (Palace of fairies).**—A massive building, now in ruins, standing on the side of the mountain to the south of Lake Dal: it is said to have been erected in the time of the Mughal emperors for astronomical

observations. It has a garden attached to it with 6 terraces. 172
The retaining wall is ornamented with a series of arches. It has a domed ceiling.

Pandrethan.—The temple of Pandrethan is situated about 4 miles away from Srinagar. The pond in which it was erected has been drained and the plinth excavated. The domed roof is a fine piece of sculpture. The temple is about 18 feet square with projecting porticos. It was erected by King Partha in A. D. 921.

Harwan.—Recent excavations have revealed one of the oldest monuments at Harwan, containing the only remains of its kind in India. A temple and some tablets have been unearthed, which date the monument as belonging to the Kushan period, when Kashmir was closely connected with Central Asia. The remains are situated only a few furlongs below the water reservoir at Harwan.

Avantipura.—It is situated on the right bank of the Jhelum at a distance of 18 miles from Srinagar. It was the capital of the famous king, Avanti Varman, who built here two temples of Avanti Swamin and Avanti Sura, one before his accession to the throne and the other subsequently. These temples were dedicated to Vishnu and Shiva. The gateways of both are standing and the conspicuous ruins attract the attention of all visitors to Kashmir, as revealing the old art of carving.

Martand.—The celebrated temple of Martand possesses far more imposing dimensions than any other existing temple. The total length of the temple is 63 feet. The walls are still standing, though the roof has been totally ruined. The pillared quadrangle round the temple is 220 feet by 142 feet. The stones are very finely carved.

Pattan.—This place is situated at a distance of 17 miles from Srinagar. The ruins of two temples are found here. These were erected by Sankaravarman and his queen, Sugandha.

(B) Among the chief places of interest in Jammu Province mention may be made of the following :—

Kishtwar.—This is one of the best places for trekking, and big game is found here abundantly. Forest rest-houses and tourists' huts have been constructed at several places for housing facilities of tourists and sportsmen. 485 361

Bhadarwah.—It is a small beautiful town, surrounded by hills on all sides, with an altitude of 5,540 feet above